

Children, Pesticides, and the Benefits of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

What are the dangers of pesticide exposure to children?

- Birth defects, neurological complications, respiratory illnesses, and cancers have all been linked to pesticide exposure in children.
- Certain commonly used insecticides have been shown to cause developmental delays in children, and that these chemicals can affect babies that are still in the womb. Exposure has been linked to low birth weight, and significantly reduced mental and motor skills.
- Children are much more susceptible to the negative affects of pesticide exposure due to their rapid development and metabolic rate, which is much faster than an adults.
- Infants and toddlers “live low.” Pesticide spraying reaches much higher levels in the 10 inches above the ground, where children play and crawl, and can stay present for over 24 hours.
- They also have less developed immune and nervous systems - while their bodies are still developing, young children are more susceptible to the adverse effects of exposure to toxins.

What is Integrated Pest Management?

*“The **comprehensive** approach to pest management that combines **biological, physical, chemical, and cultural** tactics as well as **effective, economic, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable** methods to prevent and solve pest problems that **emphasizes pest prevention** and provides **a decision-making process** for determining if, when, and where pest suppression is need and what control tactics and methods are appropriate.”*

- The Schoolchildren’s Health Act of 2006 currently protects 1.5 million of North Carolina’s children from over-exposure to toxins in public and charter school. The policy mandates the use of integrated pest management in all public and charter schools.
- 25 states already have IPM policies in child care facilities. In North Carolina we are well positioned to expand our current child safety policy to include these at risk environments.

What are the benefits of IPM?

- Pesticides can harm beneficial plants and insects that we need for a strong and diverse ecosystem.
- According to a study done by Toxic Free NC, on average North Carolina school districts spend \$1.77 per student per year on pest control while districts with least-toxic pest control programs (such as IPM) spend \$1.49 per student per year.
- IPM has been shown to be more effective than conventional spray programs in combatting pests and their allergens.



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